

Testimony in Support of HB 418**Stan Weaver, President****Montana Quarter Horse Association**

I'm Stan Weaver, President of the Montana Quarter Horse Association. I farm and ranch southeast of Big Sandy with my two sons David and Daniel in the Bears Paw Mountains. I'm a fourth generation Montanan. Charlie Russell stayed with my great-granddad William Weaver during the winter of 1892-93 in Chinook, MT. Our brand was recorded in 1888 and my grandchildren are the sixth generation of Weavers to ride horses with the AX brand. In those 121 years since we began ranching, I don't believe there has been a year that the AX brand has not been put on a colt. My family has as much horse history as any family in Montana. In recent years our family has held a ranch production sale and at our 13th sale last fall we sold horses into 24 states, 4 Canadian Provinces and Mexico.

A horse can stir up our inner emotions like no other animal, and this can be related to each of us in this room. For me, it is the starting of a young colt on cattle and observing it's athleticism and intelligence. This is truly a unique feeling and one you can only experience with a horse and through living the western lifestyle. I take as much pride and enjoyment in my horses as the next person. But my horses are my business, as it is for most of the people in this room. I do not refer to my horses as pets, nor do I refer to them as my children, or to myself as their parent. I do respect the people who feel this way towards their horses, but I also expect those people to respect my position as a horse owner and breeder.

Our government considers the horse livestock. The U.S. Congress ruled in 2002 that a horse was livestock thus making it eligible for Farm Service Agency regulations. The Federal Tax system allows horses to be a business expense. The Montana State Government puts an assessment tax on the horse. These laws are already in place and therefore state that the horse is private property. Horse owners can still place their horses in sanctuaries or give them away to an owner in better circumstances, but as a

member of this industry, we should be able to have a choice as where our horses, our personal property, goes.

A few figures I would like to share with you: In 1992 there were 4.2 million horses in the United States and 345,000 were processed. In 2007, there were up to 9.5 million horses in the U.S. The last records on horse processing in 2006 report that there were 100,000 horses processed that year. One third of all horse owners make \$50,000 or less a year. Because of our economic problem in the country and the cost of feed, we are looking at approximately 3,000,000 horses being in jeopardy. As you can see from these figures, the unwanted horse is going to become a huge problem over the next few years if something is not done to address the issue.

It doesn't matter what we decide here today, the people of the world will still keep eating horse meat.

The majority of the world's culture, including most of Europe and Asia, appreciate horse meat.

Currently the largest importers of horsemeat are China, Brazil and Mexico. The demand for horsemeat is predicted to double in the next ten years. The U.S. imports over 1.5 million pounds of horsemeat yearly to feed big cats in our nation's zoos, as well as for ethnic markets such as the Tongans in Salt Lake City.

After testimonies are heard here today, I would ask the Senate Ag Committee to really weigh the options that are presented to the horse and the horse industry. All we are asking for is the option to help alleviate the problem of the unwanted horse. With the sanctuaries being at capacity in this state the unwanted horse is going to become a much larger problem with each passing year. With the extra costs to our local government, and the starvation, neglect and slow deaths the horses will receive because of these issues; I strongly encourage the Montana Senate Ag Committee to vote yes on HB 418.